



## **BDCP Habitat Conservation Measure (FLOO1.1): Modification of Fremont Weir and Spring Inundation of the Yolo Bypass**

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area is a unique resource that provides substantial environmental, social, and economic benefits to the people of California. The 16,000 acres consists of an outstanding mix of terrestrial and wetland habitats that is home to many threatened and endangered species. It is the most popular wildlife viewing, environmental education, and waterfowl hunting destination in the Sacramento Delta.

Habitat Conservation Measures described in the Bay Delta Conservation Plan will have adverse impacts on the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Specifically, the proposed Floodplain Habitat Restoration Conservation Measure (FLOO1.1): "Modify the Fremont Weir and the Yolo Bypass to provide for a higher frequency and duration of inundation," must be evaluated for compatibility with existing public use programs, agricultural and wetland operations, and legal obligations under state, federal and international law.

The immediate **adverse impacts** of more frequent inundation of the Yolo Bypass include but are not limited to:

- **Public Use (All public use activities cease when the Bypass floods.)**
  - School Program: Approximately 4,000 students annually visit the Wildlife Area annually as part of the "Discover the Flyway" program. The program attracts students from over 100 schools in 5 counties.
  - Hunting Activity: Over 4,000 hunters utilize the area from throughout northern California. Hunter dollars provide the largest component of the operating budget at Yolo.
  - Wildlife Viewing: It is estimated that 30,000 people a year visit the Wildlife Area to view the large variety and number of birds, which peak in the winter and spring months.
- **Agriculture**
  - Agricultural Activities: There will be an inability to plant fields until they have dried out enough to begin ground tillage. Delaying this initiation of farming activity severely limits what can be grown here. White rice production will be severely impacted.
  - Forage value of uplands: Prolonged flooding results in the introduction of unwanted plant species, such as cocklebur, in the uplands. This will lead to a reduction in grazing lease fees and subsequent reduction in operating funds.
- **Wildlife**
  - Spring Nesting: This activity will be nearly eliminated. Ground nesting birds such as waterfowl, harriers, kites and shorebirds are especially vulnerable to spring flooding.
  - Rodent Presence: Fewer rodents, due to flooding, results in a reduction in food for wintering raptors.
  - Threatened and Endangered Terrestrial and Wetland Species: There will be adverse impacts to numerous protected species.

### ***Adverse Impacts (continued)***

- **Vector Control**
  - Best Management Practices: Established BMPs for wetland management under controlled conditions will not apply, resulting in increased mosquito production. The BMPs are the basis for our working relationship with Sacramento Yolo Mosquito and Vector Control District.
- **Flood Control**
  - Agreed upon vegetation densities will not be manageable with increased spring flooding, which encourages uncontrolled growth of tules, cattails and willows. This will make the Wildlife Area non compliant with the flood control function of the Yolo Bypass.
- **Methylmercury**
  - Best Management Practices: Current BMPs developed as part of a Total Maximum Daily Load for the Delta, will reduce the creation of methylmercury in wetlands that is subsequently transported to the Delta. These BMPs will not be applicable with increased flooding. The result could be a net increase in the levels of methylmercury being transported to the Delta.

### **Existing Obligations Impacted by FLOO1.1:**

- Agreements signed by DFG to manage habitat that is compatible with flood control: Project Modification Report, USACOE and DFG 1992; Other MOUs signed in 1994.
- Legal requirements of federal and state easement programs including federal Wetland Reserve Program, Presley Program and others on both public and private lands require a set management regime.
- Use of NAWCA funds to restore wetlands obligated DFG to manage the constructed wetlands for the benefit of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds in perpetuity.
- Increased spring inundation compromises the long established goals of the Central Valley Joint Venture and violates the DFG's commitment to manage these wetlands for waterfowl and shorebirds.
- Increased spring inundation affects the International Waterfowl Management Plan, an international treaty aimed at protecting migratory waterfowl populations.
- The Wildlife Area provides important habitat for several listed species, including Giant Garter Snake, Snowy Plover, Conservancy Fairy Shrimp, and Ferris' Alakali Milk Vetch.